

Health and Wellbeing

Madam president, distinguished guests, fellow state councillors, members of ICPA, ladies and gentlemen it gives me great pleasure to present my first Health and Well-Being report for ICPA-NSW for 2022.

The beginning of last year saw many of us still negotiating the daily challenges of Covid isolation, close contacts, and the many different interpretations that this had in our daily lives and schooling. We still had children being forced to return home as close contacts or isolating in the boarding house and these differed significantly from school to school. The fear of the continuation of the previous years struggles was real. Luckily as term 2 and 3 approached life returned to the “norm” for many as isolation periods and close contact definitions eased. Hopefully this will be the last time we have to speak about Covid and the impacts that it has had on our families and our well-being. However, we should not underestimate the ongoing impact that this time has had on our children and there are many important lessons that we have learnt.

Numerous boarding schools have implemented health and wellbeing programs into their educational approach utilizing the skills of outside organisations who are able to make strong connections with the students through the facilitation of their programs. Many of these programs provide the students with the skills and confidence to discuss topics often considered taboo or too tough such as suicide, depression, sexuality, alcohol and drugs. I’m encouraged with the positive feedback I hear from students, staff and facilitators.

As the year progressed, we were able to focus our attention to all the other health and well-being issues affecting our ICPA members. Deputation in June saw State Council raise numerous issues on behalf of our members. These included access to mental health services in rural and remote areas, school counselling services, IPTAAS, post-natal services, limited access to Allied Health Services and the economic significance of women returning to the workforce in rural and remote areas. A common factor in all these issues was the importance of continuity in these services and the varying differences with services provided across the different districts. We frequently hear about members having to start from scratch and having to develop new relationships when either services are suspended, or staff move on.

The NSW State Budget showed some positive announcements on these issues for rural and remote families in relation to health and well-being including;

- \$149.5 million increase in allocation for IPTASS, with the rebate set to increase from 22c to 40c per Km. Increases in the stay away from home rates for 1 to 7 days also increasing significantly.
- \$111.2 million for development checks in preschools delivered jointly by the Department of Education and Ministry of Health.
- \$38.6 million for a State-wide expansion of Pregnancy Family Conferencing for vulnerable women and their families.
- \$32 million in grants and training support to assist women to return to work after lengthy stints out of paid employment.

- \$25 million to increase the number of fit-for-purpose, safe, accessible and inclusive female sport facilities in NSW
- \$5.2 million to extend the support for post-natal mental health services delivered by not-for-profit organisations.

ICPA-NSW is hopeful that these budget announcements will filter into rural and remote areas and provide some much-needed assistance to our communities and families.

ICPA-NSW have recently held introductory meetings with The Gidget Foundation Australia and Tresillian. The Gidget Foundation offers support to new parents especially those struggling with perinatal anxiety, depression and offers emotional well being support to new parents. Tresillian Family Care Centres have been offering support to mothers and babies since its induction in 1918. Their services have continued to evolve and adjust to the changing needs of society over the last 100 years and ICPA-NSW look forward to working more closely with both organisations to provide information on services available and advocate for the increased need of these services in rural and remote communities.

NSW Ministry of Health has recently introduced a Rural Health Workforce Incentive Scheme aimed at stabilising the supply of health workers in rural and remote locations. The incentive scheme allows for financial and non-financial incentives to be offered to health workers such as nurses and allied health professionals who have recently taken up a position that meets the eligibility criteria, this also includes existing members of the health workforce to encourage retention in eligible positions and roles. These incentives can include a payment up to \$10,000 at the commencement of employment plus \$10,000 each year that they stay, additional personal leave, additional base salary, accommodation assistance and relocation benefits. Each individual health district can identify positions and roles that meet the eligibility criteria and apply to have the incentive scheme applied to the position. Hopefully this scheme will encourage not only new health workers to our regions but also encourage them to stay.

I would like to thank my fellow state councillors for welcoming me into the fold, answering my questions, the continual laughs and guiding through my first year on council. I can honestly say even though I had been a member for over 8 years I had no idea of the countless hours and work that goes on behind the scenes, so thank you to those councillors that have come before me. Most importantly my extremely supportive husband and family who have learnt to deal with the numerous zoom meetings as I lock myself away in the office and decline the phone calls from my children away at school, the normal response is now "oh it's ICPA night". I look forward to what 2023 and beyond has to offer for the Health and Well-Being portfolio. We seem to be slowly moving in the right direction and ticking items off the list.

Myfi Kellahan

Health and Wellbeing Portfolio